

Interview with James O'Brien Howard

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

JAMES O'BRIEN HOWARD

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Q: Today is August 20, 1993. This is an interview with James O'Brien Howard on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Jim, could we start off with a little about your background ...when you were born, where you were born, a little about your family and early upbringing?

HOWARD: I was born in Selma, Alabama, November 30, 1915. My family lived on a general farm...cotton, cattle, soybeans.

Q: Soybeans even in those days?

HOWARD: Not a major crop. Primarily for cattle feed and as a source of nitrogen to build up the soil.

There were three brothers and one sister. We boys all worked on the farm when we had any free time. We had a cotton patch every summer to earn a little money and strengthen our character. These were not good times on the farm. By the time I got to college age the depression had hit, 1932. My dad said that he couldn't send me to college because there just wasn't the money, although my older brother had been to college. I borrowed money and got to college. Went to Birmingham Southern College, which is a Methodist

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school which my father had also gone to. It was a liberal arts school. In those days once you found a way to work your way through college, you had to stay with it. So I got odd jobs, some scholarship help and a bit of family help. I went summer and winter sticking to the jobs. So in six years I had gotten an B.A., MA and Ph.D. degree.

Q: What was your field?

HOWARD: My undergraduate was Liberal Arts, but my Masters was in Constitutional Law and the Doctorate was in International Relations. I wrote on Elihu Root's contributions to international judication. The Doctorate, by the way, was at the University of Iowa which was a good, midwestern, solid institution.

Q: What attracted you to international affairs?

HOWARD: Well, it was a long way from that farm and that cotton patch. My parents were both college educated, which was rather strange for farm people in that stage of our history. They were reasonably widely read and we would always have the Methodist preacher in for dinner on Sunday and there was always a discussion of national and to some extent international affairs. My dad served in the Alabama State Legislature.

I don't know if anyone has ever asked me that question, precisely. It just seemed like an interesting field. I had a good professor under whom I wrote.

I suppose the next question would be how I ended up in the Department of Agriculture?

Q: Yes.

HOWARD: This was 1939, when I finished. The New Deal in agriculture was struggling to educate the local agricultural workers as to what the New Deal was all about. Here was a revolutionary concept of controlling production, much more farmer democracy in it.

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How do you go about this? Well, they took an interesting approach. They hired a professor of philosophy from Harvard, a professor of business ethics, a man named Carl Taeusch, to head it up. He had given up trying to teach Harvard business ethics. They weren't interested. So he said, "Well, I'll join the government and we'll regulate them."

So he came to Washington and began to recruit a staff to cover the whole range of social sciences...agricultural economics, but also philosophy, sociology. He wanted a political scientist. He had used as one of the teachers in the conferences that he organized a man at the University of Iowa named Porter. Porter had been successful at these conferences, so he got in touch with him. He said, "Do you have a man who might fill this bill?" He said, "Well, I have a chap named Howard with a farm background and he loves politics and mixing with politicians. He might do you a good job." So I went to Washington.

Q: You went to Washington in 1939. Was Henry Wallace still in charge as Secretary of Agriculture?

HOWARD: Very much so, yes.

Q: What was your impression of Henry Wallace at that time?

HOWARD: Henry Wallace was highly respected. He was a visionary and he had contributed much to the development of hybrid corn. He knew economics. We thought he was a great person.

Q: What type of things were you doing?

HOWARD: Taeusch was organizing conferences of mostly three days. Let's say we go to Iowa and the Agricultural Extension Service would have agreed to participate. Taeusch would recruit a staff for a three day conference. In the mornings there would be lectures and then in the afternoon the attending group would break up into small groups for discussion. They would come back at the close of the day and the discussion leaders

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would be a panel to question these speakers. The speakers were as diverse as you would imagine. They were journalists, philosophers, professors from academic institutions, leaders from government, clergy. I remember an editorial writer from the Christian Science Monitor served on one of them. Markham, I believe was his name. He couldn't believe that the Department of Agriculture would recruit speakers, some of whom would be critical of what the government was doing and given absolute freedom. He wrote a very favorable letter to the Christian Science Monitor.

We also were writing pamphlets to be used by farm leaders or agricultural leaders in small group discussion. We were training people on how to organize and lead discussions. I was responsible for the work in the Southern States. Believe you me it was a wonderful experience for a young person just out of university.

Q: What sort of people were you recruiting? Farms are always considered the most conservative of the population, but this was really a time of revolution in the United States, particularly in the farming area. Who were you talking to?

HOWARD: Who were we talking to?

Q: You were working to develop leaders within the Southern community.

HOWARD: But the main organization through which we were working was the Agricultural Extension Service. You may remember that you have the county agent, the home demonstration agent in each county. This is a Federal-State organization, quite independent of Washington, though they got considerable Federal help. You found the headquarters in each Land Grant college and those were the major people that we worked with. Some of them were quite receptive and some of them were somewhat less so. But over a period of time we met with most of them.

Q: Did the war have any impact on the type of work you were doing?

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HOWARD: I continued for some bit of time to do this work, but the nature of the conferences changed because with the actual war and food being important on the world scene, the messages we tried to get over changed somewhat and became more meaningful to these agricultural leaders out in the states. But they were quite receptive to it once the war broke out.

Q: When did you first start getting involved in the international side of things?

HOWARD: There were two or three steps in there. I went down and talked briefly at Duke University when all of the professors were coming to Washington. I got drafted into the Army from down there in Duke. Went into the Army and served in Hawaii writing pamphlets which explained what the war was all about for a couple of years. I then came back and wrote speeches for the Secretary of Agriculture.

Q: Who was...?

HOWARD: Clinton P. Anderson from New Mexico. Charlie Brandon was the Under Secretary. When Truman was running against Dewey, I thought Truman was going to lose and I had to get out of the Secretary's office because it was somewhat political. I started looking around and went to the Foreign Agricultural Service...then it was called the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, OFAR...and talked to the Information Director, although I wasn't trained in information, I had done speech writing. The head of the Information Division said, "Jim, I don't have a job for you except my own. I am leaving to become the head of FAO, the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization international division. You can have my job." And that is when I got into the foreign...

Q: This would be about 1948?

HOWARD: No. Truman's election was in 1948 so that would have been about 1949.

Q: Can you give a feel for what the type of work was like that you were doing then?

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HOWARD: The foreign work of the Department of Agricultural was very much in transition at that time. The war is just over. Europe is in chaos. There is a question of can we help feed Europe.

Let me backtrack. When I was writing speeches for the Secretary's office, that was the time the Marshall Plan was being debated. One of the key questions faced by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which had the major role in this, was, "Do we have enough food to do this job that General Marshall and President Truman have proposed?"

Clinton Anderson set up a committee of key people to study this question. I was attached to that committee to be the scribe. There was some wonderful work done. The net result was, "Yes, we do have enough food. We can do the job. We can feed our people without sacrificing at home and do the job that Europe needs."

So I had the fun of writing the testimony which Clinton Anderson gave before Senator Vandenberg, who was Chairman, then, of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Anderson was a wonderful speaker. We had all sorts of charts. They practically gave him the Pulitzer Prize. He was wonderful.

Q: When you were doing this investigation, were you feeling any pressure on you of the answer that was to come out, or were people really looking at this dispassionately?

HOWARD: Well, you see, I was not a member of the committee, itself, I guess. I was a writer. We obviously were biased to the extent we wanted to find that there was enough food, but the committee...the committee was headed by a man named O. V. Wells who was head of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and was later Deputy Director of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. He was an able, able economist. We had good statisticians. Had our analysis proven faulty, we wouldn't have looked very good.

Q: There would have been a lot of hungry, angry Americans after you.

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HOWARD: Right.

Q: Looking at this with the Marshall Plan and all, and food, of course, was a vital element of it, were you looking at ways of increasing the amount of food we produced? Was this a factor?

HOWARD: Let's back up in answering that question. After World War I, US agriculture had faced a crisis. They had expanded to meet the war needs and they figured that the market was going to retrench, so they had cut back very much on production and we had an agricultural recession, which I vaguely recall was quite costly.

After World War II, they faced this same question. Secretary of Agriculture Benson and President Eisenhower, along with the farm leaders in the Congress, and the farm organizations like the American Farm Bureau Federation, said, "Let's go the other way. Let's continue a high level of production and find ways to sell it, particularly abroad. There are people abroad who need it." That was the gist of the new agricultural program. In fact, I helped write testimony along that line while I was still in the Secretary's office.

Q: So, we are back to the Office of Foreign Agriculture Relations in 1949. The Marshall Plan is beginning to kick in and all that. What were you doing, what was your office doing?

HOWARD: My job was to run the information office of this little branch of the Department of Agriculture. I had speech writers; and I wrote testimony,; we published a regular monthly magazine called "Foreign Agriculture" which consisted of developments in foreign agriculture; we published a weekly mimeographed crops and markets which...

Stu, the function, if I may backtrack for just a second, the function of OFAR in those days was to collect worldwide agricultural information, collate it, analyze it and get it up to the people who needed it in the US, not only farm leaders, but business leaders. So the

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information division was a key part of this process. Our technical people would write the pamphlets, draw up the tables and we would get them out to the public.

Q: What was the situation at the Department of Agriculture ...I came into the Foreign Service in 1955, and at that time we had a full blown agricultural attach# program where every major embassy and every country with an important agricultural component to it, had an American agricultural attach#. We are talking about 1949, the immediate post-war period. What type of a system did we have at that time overseas?

HOWARD: It was infinitely smaller than when you came onto the scene. It went through some revolutions, but about the time we are talking about, the agricultural attach#s were not employed by the US Department of Agriculture. We will get a little later into my first experience as an attach#. I had to be seconded to the State Department. I went onto State Department rolls to go as agricultural attach#. The Department of Agriculture reimbursed State. It wasn't until about 1953 that the agricultural attach#s were taken out of the State Department and made a separate arm of the Department of Agriculture.

Q: How were you getting these reports that you were filtering and transmitting again?

HOWARD: Well, we had these agricultural attach#s covering the major agricultural producing nations of the world and the agricultural markets of the world. We had someone in Argentina, Brazil. We might have one man covering two or three of the smaller countries of South America, or Europe. But in a place like London, which was a major market for various agricultural products, and also a source of international agricultural information...you had friends like Unilever, for example, the fats and oil soap makers, they were a great source of information for us too. So we always had a strong unit in London. We had a strong unit in Germany. We had a strong organization in China, believe it or not. So they wrote reports on a regular schedule. On such and such a date the quarterly wheat report was due in. They came into Washington and were analyzed not only as to what

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the world's production of wheat was going to be, but what was happening to the world's market for wheat.

Q: What about the Soviet Union and its Eastern European countries? Was there a problem getting information? Was there an effort on the part of the powers that be to make sure that we cast them in an unfavorable light as possible?

HOWARD: Getting information was extremely difficult. We had put some of our best people in Moscow. They were given good training, good language training. They had to rely on their own resources, whereas when I went to my first post in Portugal, I had a good Portuguese assistant. In Moscow you might have a Russian assistant who might be doing translating for you, but you couldn't trust him. You had to do your own analysis. Still you have to realize that in this vacuum of world information, the analysis of the crops in Russia, done by the US Department of Agriculture, were of worldwide importance. There were only two basic sources of information. One was the FAO and the other was the US Department of Agriculture. We thought ours was much better because we didn't have to cater to the nation giving us the information.

Q: The FAO being part of the United Nations.

HOWARD: Yes.

Q: And the Soviet Union being one of the charter members, obviously there was a client relationship there.

HOWARD: Yes. But that didn't mean that they told them the truth.

Q: Although it wasn't quite put together there, were you getting input from our intelligence sources?

HOWARD: I am not the best source of information on this because I never served in that part of the world, but we have always, and this became more important perhaps in later

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years, had excellent relations with our intelligence community. And I hasten to say that we made some contributions to that.

Q: How long were you doing this informational work?

HOWARD: About three years. I should tell you that I had a second function during that period. Attached to the Information Division was the job of the liaison with the international organizations...FAO being the principal one. So I was also secretary to the US Committee on FAO and had two people on my staff who worked full time on that. I went to all the early meetings of FAO and even after they moved their headquarters to Rome, I continued to go and have a certificate from Harry Truman appointing me as the permanent secretary to the US delegate to the Council of the FAO. The Council was the small body that met twice a year.

Q: What was your impression at that time of the FAO? What it was doing, how it was staffed, how good it was in what it was trying to do?

HOWARD: Maybe I wasn't the most objective person, but here is a young PhD in International Relations and here is the United Nations getting started. I was emotionally very committed to it. But, from an objective standpoint, I thought it was working pretty well. The US put a lot of resources into it...mostly Agriculture, but State had the people and Interior had people in Fisheries. We always had strong delegations. Though the first Director General was British, it wasn't too many years before one of our leading scientists was Director General of the FAO, _____ Cardin [ph]. He was a personal friend of mine. He may not have been the best Director General.

But FAO was getting started. It was pulling together information. It was beginning its technical assistance program. It carried a lot of goodwill from all over the Western world.

Q: What was FAO trying to do in those years?

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HOWARD: Intelligence and technical assistance.

Q: Was it pretty much the feeling that the United States was preeminent in technical assistance in those days?

HOWARD: I wouldn't put it that way. But if you wanted an expert on livestock to be sent to some developing country to advise on their livestock breeding program, where would you look? You would look to not so many countries in the world. The US was perhaps the best source for that sort of thing. So FAO did a great deal of recruiting in this country.

Q: Did you get any feel for the contribution that other countries were making towards the FAO?

HOWARD: Surely, you are sitting in these conferences and you see it in two ways. You see it in the budget and you see it in the support they give to the technical committees and the quality of people. The Canadians, for example, always had first rate people. The Brits had first rate people. I am sure a number of the other European countries did. I don't think the Russians joined FAO.

Q: We are now moving towards the time when you are just beginning to get out into the foreign affairs world. Around 1951 was your first assignment abroad.

HOWARD: That sounds about right.

Q: I have you going to Lisbon in 1951-53. How did that come about?

HOWARD: I had a theory that in this early period of my career, about three years is as long as a job would contribute to my development so about every three years I tried to move forward. Three years would give me time to make my contribution and maybe level out in my contribution and be ready for the next step in my career.

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So here I was running this information division and all these attach#s were coming back. We had conferences and I knew a lot of them and was ready to go out. My wife, who has always been a very strong party of this family in this commission was willing to go too. We had two small children, but she said...

Q: So you went to Portugal in 1951. What was the situation as you saw it in Portugal at that time?

HOWARD: Portugal was not one of the developed countries of Europe. Salazar had been dictator for a long, long time. The agriculture was not best developed, but they had some good people. It was a good place for a young attach# to have his first experience. I had first been assigned to Denmark and then the boss said, "The Ambassador to Portugal is insisting that he needs someone, so we are going to switch you." But Denmark would have been a much more interesting _____.

Q: Was Portugal self-sustaining at that time?

HOWARD: Portugal at that time, you have to remember, had some important African colonies in Mozambique and Angola and some smaller ones in Asia. Trade with them was important. They were drawing on Portugal for financial resources, though. As I recall, Portugal was about self-sufficient. We sold them some wheat and cotton and they exported olive oil and leaves. They were not a significant agricultural exporter.

Q: What did you do? What does an agricultural attach# do in not a major country?

HOWARD: Basic job is to write these reports commodity by commodity that go back to Washington on a pre-determined schedule and are used to write these regional and world reports. So I had a calendar of reporting dates. On such and such a date I have to have a report on the Portuguese olive crop in Washington. And it isn't always easy. Where do you get your information?

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Again I have to mention this Portuguese assistant—Dominicus Aspirtus Santo [ph]. He had been over here a few years as a young man and spoke and wrote pretty good English. So he would help me. In those days you didn't get much language training. I had five weeks of Portuguese at the Foreign Service Institute before leaving. But I hired a tutor to come in at the lunch hour and tutor me. I became reasonably proficient, not great.

We would use published information, go to the olive oil institute; go to that branch of the Ministry of Agriculture dealing with that industry. Part of my job was to cultivate those people so that they were willing to cooperate. That was sometimes easy and sometimes not so.

Then you would find that the figures didn't balance. Portugal had more olive oil than the total of its production minus exports. Why? I dug into it and found that olive oil was being smuggled across the border from Spain because it was a better price than Portugal and that was where the disparity was coming from.

Q: What was the impression of the Salazar government? You were part of the Embassy team. How did they feel about Salazar in those days?

HOWARD: In those days as now we believe in democracy and that they did not have. But he was a benign dictator. He was a professor of economics, finance, at the university when he was recruited for this job. His sole means of staying in power was his threat to resign. "If you don't like what I do, I will go back to the university." They had had so much chaos before he came, that they said, "No, no, please stay." And he stayed for 25 to 30 years.

Q: Who was running our Embassy in those days?

HOWARD: Let me think. One of the Ambassadors I had there was Guggenheim, Anacostia Copper. He was a pure political appointment. All he had ever done in life was

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clip coupons and contribute to the Republican Party. His wife, Polly, was a delightful person.

I remember my first cocktail party. We had just moved into this house after living in a hotel for two months with two small children. So we had to have a cocktail party. We invited the list of people important to the office. The Ambassador had graciously agreed to be there. My wife and I were a bit nervous. The Ambassador came after the party was going a bit, and we greeted him and asked him what he would have. He said, "I would like a martini." I summoned the waiter we had hired and said, "Do you know how to make a martini?" "Si, si, senor." The Ambassador said, "But I want three gin and one vermouth." I asked if he understood and he said, "Si, si." I said, "Tres gin and un vermouth." "Si, senor."

I went on with my greetings and pretty soon Ambassador Guggenheim pulled my coattail and I turned around and here was the waiter in front of the Ambassador holding a tray with three glasses of gin and one of vermouth. The Ambassador said, "That is all right dear, go ahead and drink it and we will shake you and get the same effect."

Cavendish Cannon had just been there as Ambassador. Then he went to Spain. He was a career Ambassador.

Q: He was one of the imperial ambassadors.

HOWARD: He retired just down the street from where we are living. He had a wonderful reputation.

There was another Ambassador who followed Guggenheim, but I'll think of that later. [note from transcriber: James C. H. Bonbright followed Guggenheim.]

There were always excellent number two people who ran the Embassy. And we had a good Economic Counselor, who was my major boss.

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Q: An agricultural expert comes from a completely different background than most Foreign Service officers. How did you find professionally you were used at the Embassy?

HOWARD: Stu, this is not an easy situation and some agricultural attach#s had difficulties. I did not. You have two bosses. I am the agricultural person on the Ambassador's staff and do whatever he asks of me. But my real boss, my more important boss, is the Secretary of Agriculture, who through OFAR is sending these requirements that I do this reporting. So you have to be careful. But with career ambassadors who know the situation, know what my job is...they have commercial attach#s doing similar reporting...it was not difficult. In some posts I was of considerable use to the Ambassador.

Q: While you were in Portugal did we have any agricultural disputes or problems with Portugal?

HOWARD: No. My job was more getting them to cooperate with us in international forums where we were maybe attacking the Europeans on some of their food and drug regulations that were discriminating against our crops. Or we would work with the Portuguese in getting a common position in FAO conferences. But we didn't have any serious debates with them like we have had with some other countries.

Q: You left Portugal in 1953?

HOWARD: I was there for nineteen months. The reason I left so soon...you know you want your first post to be as long as you can get it so that you can get a reputation ...but the State Department at that time had one of the biggest budget cuts it had ever had. They told Agriculture that they had to cut out a number of attach# posts.

Q: This was the big Eisenhower RIF, I guess.

HOWARD: The boss who was running OFAR was a close personal friend by this time. His name was Fred Rossiter. I wrote him and said, "Fred, I know the pressures you are under

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to cut posts. I have trained a good local assistant here and I think we could do without an American here for a year or two without great lost. So if you want to bring me home I think it would not create a big problem.” I had been the first attach# in Portugal. He accepted by return mail. It was one of the cruelest things I ever did to my family because the wife and two children had just gotten settled in and were loving it and we got pulled home after nineteen months.

Q: You came back to Washington to do what?

HOWARD: I was back from 1953-55. Some important changes had taken place in my base organization by this time. When Eisenhower came in there was this question of what the agricultural policy should be..should we continue production? One of the major means of getting rid of these surpluses which were developing was PL 480, the Agricultural Trade and Development Act of 1954. This was a major piece of legislation, not only in agriculture but in the foreign affairs community because it said that we can sell these surpluses to a country that has balance of payments difficulties and they don't have to pay for them with convertible currency. They can pay for them with blocked currency, which we have to spend in that country.

So the question then was, we are going to have blocked currency in many countries in the world, what do we do with it? Congress in considering this and Agriculture considering this made a long list of things. One of them was to develop new markets for US agricultural commodities on a mutually benefitting basis. They took this draft legislature over to the Under Secretary of Agriculture, John Davis. John studied it and took that one use and moved it up to the first and it became the genesis of a new program in the Department of Agriculture...to develop foreign markets.We had money now.

About that same time, 1953, I think it was, Congress had voted to move the agricultural attach#s out of the State Department and make them direct employees of the Department of Agriculture.

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Q: Do you have any idea of the genesis behind this?

HOWARD: Yes, I was hoping you would give me a chance to tell this story.

This was something that Agriculture had long wanted and State, for fairly obviously reasons, had not wanted. They wanted to be a unified Foreign Service entity. Our people were pushing hard for it and with all this genesis of these programs I am telling you about...there were stronger reasons for it.

John Davis went over to President Eisenhower. Secretary Dulles was out of the city so Ike called Bedell Smith in. This is the way John Davis told me this story. John Davis explained that we wanted these men under our own control. He said, "Mr. President, it is just like your military attach#s. You wouldn't want them controlled by the State Department, would you?" And Ike said, "Bedell, that makes sense doesn't it?" Bedell said, "Yes, it does." And that is how it happened. If Dulles had been in town that never would have happened.

Q: This is always one of the great ploys, to make your move when your principal opponent is out of town. So you now had a full blown attach# service in the Department of Agriculture.

HOWARD: We had a new legislative charter and a new name. It became the Foreign Agricultural Service. This happened in 1953/54. I came back just as this process was starting and was put into the Cotton Division as the Deputy Director. Of course I grew up on a cotton farm in Alabama.

Q: What were we doing in cotton?

HOWARD: This is the most important world fiber. Cotton is important to a lot of parts of the world. The intelligence on it is important. Also, we had had from the triple A days, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, control of cotton acreage. You had a lot of politics. Stu, if you know politics, you know the Southern politicians could be the most political

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of all because the Senators would stay in there a life time. So cotton was highly political and it was important. It had some good leadership down in the cotton belt. Some of them had gotten together and organized the National Cotton Council, which consisted of cotton farmers, cotton spinners, cotton ginner, the oil seed crushers...there were about five sectors of this that came together to form this organization to push cotton legislation, cotton markets. They had just gotten active in the international scene. So I was working with them...a man named Reed Dunn, who had been a life long friend. That was a fun sort of thing.

Let me backup a little here. In 1953 I had just gotten back from Portugal and assigned to this position but hadn't really gotten started when the farm leaders talked President Eisenhower into sending, organizing four missions of nongovernmental leaders in the agricultural field, to send to four parts of the world to study the potential markets for agricultural products. They would be all nongovernmental except one. There had to be somebody from the government to be the liaison with the embassy and see that arrangements were made. And they said, "Here is Howard. He has had government experience." So I was made the Executive Secretary of this group to Southern Europe.

It was a find group, an able group of people headed by Jack Hudson, who was then with the Tobacco Institute, but who had been Assistant Secretary of Agriculture and Under Secretary of the UN. He was a very able man. And there was a cotton person on it and a wheat person. The cotton person on it was the person who was head of the Cotton Council, so when I began to work in that division I had a friend. His name was Ray Blake. We worked together very harmoniously.

Q: On the international field, do we have great rivals in cotton anywhere?

HOWARD: Oh, yes. Among the major cotton producers of the world are Egypt, which produces a very fine long staple cotton, and India, which produces a very short staple cotton. But it is produced widely over the world ...Pakistan, South America, Central

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America. So there had been organized an International Cotton Advisory Committee, which was a intergovernmental organization of these producing and major consuming countries, like the British, etc. One of my functions was to work with this intergovernmental organization in pulling together intelligence and sharing information about expanding markets and that sort of thing.

Q: When you got this information, did we act on it or was this mainly passed on to the cotton exporters?

HOWARD: First it went into the mill to decide how much cotton acreage shall be allowed next year. The amount of cotton acreage depends on part on the market outlook and how much surplus various nations are holding. So it was used very importantly by the US Department of Agriculture and the agricultural committees of Congress, as well as by the trade.

Q: On the foreign policy side, were we trying to stop the Indians or Egyptians who were overproducing?

HOWARD: Yes, of course we would through normal diplomatic means. But we didn't have any arm-twisting techniques that I particularly recall now. We would not only go directly through our embassy or through the Department here working the Agricultural Counselor from Egypt, etc., but we would also use this International Cotton Advisory Committee. And the Cotton Council would be over there working with the cotton spinners of England, to influence them. The Sudan was another big cotton producer. They had a million acres under one management. It was flat as a table. We used all the normal tools of diplomacy to influence these things.

Q: Was there any major problems during this time you were dealing with the cotton situation?

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HOWARD: A major problem was over production, the surpluses that were depressing the price. The US had put a floor under its price guaranteeing American farmers a set price. Under these circumstances what would you do if you were running the cotton program in Colombia? You would drop down just a couple of cents underneath that and you would begin to take the market. We had that sort of thing all over the world and it was tough.

Q: How are most of the negotiations trying to make favorable agreement done? With the Department of Agriculture or is the information handed over to the State Department which would be the principle negotiator?

HOWARD: It was done mostly through this International Cotton Advisory Committee, this intergovernmental organization, but which the trade was also very active in. Our delegation would be headed by a government person. Someone from the Department of Agriculture, someone from State would be on the delegation. And the Cotton Council people would be there. We would meet in various cotton producing or consuming countries of the world. As I recall we met every other year in plenary session. That is where we would have some tough negotiations. There again, you see, you have to agree on figures. I remember at one interim meeting in the Department of Agriculture, the Japanese said, "Your figures on our cotton consumption is just wrong. It is not that high." So my boss, who was head of that division said to me, "Jim, go back and get so-and-so to bring in such-and-such table." So I rushed back and got the table. My boss, Dr. Palmer, handed it to the Japanese representative and he blushed and said, "I am sorry, but those are our figures."

Q: I notice you mention two of our great rivals in cotton were Egypt and India. It is no secret that at that particular time our foreign policy was very heavily influenced by the Secretary of State, who was John Foster Dulles. On a personality basis, Nehru and Nasser were probably two of his least favored people in the world. Did this have any effect at all?

HOWARD: It certainly affected my next assignment.

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Q: Of course it did, but at this time did you see any instances of this?

HOWARD: The agricultural counselor from Egypt who was here was an able man and easy to communicate with, but our interests were different. They wanted to produced as much as they could and they wanted us to be the residual holder of the world. So we weren't on the same wave length. But I don't remember this national politics being a significant factor in it. But it could have been. I was just a junior officer then.

Q: We then move to your next one where the Nasser/Dulles relationship becomes more important. You went to Cairo from 1955-57. How did your assignment to Cairo come about?

HOWARD: It was a rather natural one. Again I had been in Washington, not quite three years, but quite a bit. I had enjoyed my first agricultural attach# assignment and my wife was quite willing to go. Since I had been in the Cotton Division, this was one of the world's major cotton producers, it was rather a logical assignment as soon as I said I was willing to go abroad. In fact I had been asked to go to Spain, but I felt I was so new in the Cotton Division that it might look bad for FAS to pull me out. So they left me there for a few months and I was then told I would be going to Egypt.

A small personal note. Remember I had written speeches for a Democratic Secretary of Agriculture. That made the Eisenhower group look at me with some suspicion, I suppose. So they held up my security clearance. We were on tenterhooks there for a while, but I think the thing that convinced them that I wasn't so bad, was...as I mentioned the subject of my Doctoral had been Elihu Root, who had served in the Roosevelt Cabinet as Secretary of War and Secretary of State. A good solid Republican. So they decided to let me go ahead and go to Egypt.

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Q: So you were out there in 1955. This 1955-56 period was a very, very interesting period. What was your impression of not just the agricultural side, but the situation in Egypt when you got out there?

HOWARD: Stu, I served in a number of countries and traveled fairly widely and this was one place where I always felt like a foreigner. You just never felt you were in a friendly environment. Remember that Egypt had been ruled so long by the Turks and then the Brits. It had been so long since they had a period that they could feel proud of...3,000 years. They were suspicious of Westerners in general, to start with. Not us more than others.

In the beginning, remember Nasser had decided that he must build the Aswan Dam and bring another 23 odd million acres under cultivation to provide for his expanding population. It was one of the most rapidly growing populations of the world at that time. So he was looking for financing on this high dam. Secretary of Dulles was giving him some encouragement that we would help. He was playing the Russians at the same time that he was playing us. So it wasn't the most comfortable diplomatic situation to be in.

Q: At that time what were we thinking would be the result of the Aswan Dam, which was a major key to a lot of things that happened later on. Would it help Egypt or would the long term outcome be disastrous? What were we thinking at that time?

HOWARD: I don't recall what the US government was thinking, but I remember doing an analysis of my own. I think they were going to increase the productive acreage of the country about 25 percent and it was going to take seven years to build. I took the population growth and projected it for that seven years and came out with the figure that they would have no more land per capita when they finished than they did when they started. I don't know what that added up to, but their population growth was a major factor.

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Q: Was there concern that by stopping the flow you would (1) end up with a lot of silt behind the dam and (2) this silt played an important role in making the banks of the Nile fertile and if stopped would have an effect on agriculture? Were we looking at it in that way?

HOWARD: They were going to have a means of opening the gates and letting the power of the river wash on down when the river was at major flood. I can only remember that it was a controversial issue, but from the Egyptian standpoint it made sense.

Q: How did you find working with Egyptian officials?

HOWARD: Sticky. I don't know if it was my responsibility but we pulled a coup by hiring as a local assistant in my office a son of the Under Secretary of Agriculture, Mohammed Dessouky. That meant that the Minister of Agriculture had an open channel into my office, but it also meant that I had good cooperation from some branches of the Ministry in getting figures. As far as we were concerned it was a very good trade-off. Mohammed Dessouky wrote good English. He would get the facts. I had an American assistant there at that time, too. We would work it over and put in our own input. But we got good data out of the Ministry of Agriculture and we were able to do reports that were highly regarded as I recall back in Washington.

Q: Did we have any agricultural disputes with Egypt at the time?

HOWARD: Yes. A digression. The Chairman of the Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittee of the House Appropriation Committee was a gentleman named Jamie Whitten, a Congressman from Mississippi. He just gave up that job a couple of years ago. I think he held that job for three or four decades. Jamie Whitten was absolutely adamant that we do nothing which would help cotton production in Egypt. In another building of the Embassy was AID, the Agency for International Development. They had a good staff there. And they had an agricultural person. Well now, this defies reason that you are going to

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give technical assistance to Egyptian agriculture and it is not one way or another going to help cotton. Whatever you are working on is likely to have implications for cotton. This created many awkward situations that I would get involved in to some extent with the Ambassador and the agricultural person from the AID mission.

Q: Who was the Ambassador at that time?

HOWARD: Hank Byroade and Raymond Hare were the two Ambassadors I served under there.

Q: How did you find them?

HOWARD: Hare was a career man. Byroade I never felt comfortable with, or felt close too. He was a military man and apparently a very able man. But he wasn't interested in agriculture, so I did my thing and he never got in my way. I went with him to see Nasser about something on a ceremonial occasion. But didn't see a lot of him.

Pete Hart was the Deputy Chief of Mission.

Q: How did the nationalization of the Suez Canal affect our Embassy and you in particular?

HOWARD: It affected the Embassy dramatically and I need a stronger word for what it did to my work, because my job involved travel. I was heading a regional office that covered Syria, Lebanon, the Sudan and Egypt. I had a part time local assistant in Syria and another one in Lebanon. I had a full time American assistant in Cairo. He and I covered Egypt and the Sudan by travel. With the nationalization, bingo, no more travel. No travel out of Cairo. No travel down to the delta of Egypt. How can an intelligence gathering office like ours work without being able to get out? Mohammed Dessouky could get out and my local assistants in the other countries could. But it made a tremendous difference.

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Q: What were the reason for not allowing travel?

HOWARD: Personal security. Afraid that the antagonism to...you couldn't tell from my looks whether I was an American, an Australian or a Brit, and it just wasn't safe.

Q: Before we move from this period, you mentioned that you were doing regional work. What was the situation in the Sudan? Was the Sudan at that time still under British rule?

HOWARD: The Sudan became independent during this time. The American Ambassador was a man named Lowell Pinkerton. He had been an inspector, in fact he had inspected Portugal while Guggenheim was the Ambassador there.

Q: How did he find it in Portugal?

HOWARD: He came to dinner in my home in Cairo as he was going to Khartoum. It was just he, my wife and I. I said, "Mr. Ambassador is it true that Ambassador Guggenheim dropped a spoon down the bosom of the wife of the Portuguese Foreign Minister?" He said, "Jim, he not only dropped it, he went in after it." So when Guggenheim was brought back for consultation and returned to Lisbon, he said, "He didn't bring me back for consultation, he brought me back to fire me."

Anyway, Pinkerton was an able person. He invited me down to Khartoum to stand up with him when he presented his credentials. If I may take a moment, there weren't very many people there who could record this story. The Sudanese government sent a car for each member of Pinkerton's party. There were four of us. I was the junior, the fourth. They sent a red Ford station wagon. In it was a member of the Foreign Office, who turned out to be the number two man in the Foreign Office. I said to myself, "This speaks well of the Sudanese. They respect the importance of agriculture enough to assign a man of this level to be my escort." As we chatted I said, "By the way, how many people do you have in the Foreign Office?" "Two."

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The Sudan in those days was fascinating to a young curious person like myself. You go into the Ministry of Agriculture and they would have four or five departments. Each one was headed by a trained professional. These trained professionals were generally able people. Let's say we were talking about the production aids to the cotton department. If you got below that man all you got were clerks. The Brits had educated enough that they had half a dozen or so people in the Ministry of Agriculture, each heading these units, who were very able. But below that there were just clerks who were of no help whatsoever. Those that were educated were cooperative.

Q: The Sudan was supposed to be the cream of the crop as far as the British were concerned. They sent their best people there and felt they were doing their best there. The Sudanese Colonial Service had quite a reputation.

HOWARD: Yes, and I know nothing to argue with that except in the field of agriculture it was infinitely too limited.

Q: Did we have any particular problems with the Sudan, outside of reporting what this massive cotton producing state was doing?

HOWARD: No. But I would like to contribute two stories. I mentioned this billion acre cotton plantation which was called the Gezira Scheme. We spoke of it as the Gezira Plantation. It was created by British textile interests. I wouldn't say when, but it probably was encouraged by our Civil War.

Q: Your kin made the calculation that cotton was king and if they held out the cotton the British would have to come in, and it didn't work. It was called Egyptian cotton in those days.

HOWARD: Well, I am not sure how that date tied in with the start of the Gezira scheme. I suspect it was somewhat later.

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Q: I think it was because the British, the Egyptians lost control at the turn of the century.

HOWARD: When Mahdi defeated Kitchener and slew Gordon.

This plantation was well conceived, well engineered. It had been run by British technicians using an underlayer of Sudanese. Now Sudan was becoming independent and this would affect the Gezira Plantation. I don't know exactly when, but by the time I got there, there was already a Sudanese director. He hadn't been director very long, but I recall the man. His name was Mickey Abass. A big, black, fine looking human being. Well-spoken. He had come up from the ranks and the Brits had taken an interest in him and sent him back to England for an education. He married a white, Scottish MD.

I was traveling over there with a journalist from the Saturday Evening Post named John Bird. John Bird and I were entertained by Mickey Abass and his wife. I recall flying in there in a small two-seatter plane. The captain took us around and let us see it. It was amazing. It was beautiful and functional. They were at that time in the process of creating another dam to expand this area quite appreciably. I think it finally went through, but I haven't followed it. Okay, that was one story I wanted to tell you.

Henry Cabot Lodge was our US Representative to the UN at the time. Lodge and his wife came down to be present at the presenting of credentials, or just after, to welcome the Sudan into the UN on behalf of the US, obviously playing national politics. The new Foreign Minister entertained him nicely. They had a dinner which was given in the night club in Khartoum. The night club was a structure with a dirt floor and grapevines over the arbor to keep the sun out. There were card table like tables around. We were all sitting there and they served the dinner. There are two things I recall. One was the ease with which Lodge moved from table to table ingratiating himself and chatting with all these people. The other was the Press Officer for the Sudanese government, who I found had served in Brazil and spoke Portuguese. He and I were talking in Portuguese and in English. He was in charge of keeping people's glasses filled as the Foreign Minister

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went around saying, "Fill up peoples glasses." The main glass that would get down was the Press Officer's. By the time Lodge left I remember the Press Officer rushed out and opened the door for him and couldn't find the handle which was part of his car.

Q: What about Syria? Syria at one point was a great grain producing country. We are talking now about the mid-fifties.

HOWARD: I am trying to remember about the grain. I remember going through some of the grain areas, but at that time what was much more important to us was its cotton production. It was expanding its cotton production and there was a new area that was opened up in the Euphrates Valley and we didn't know how extensive it was. I went up there with a cotton specialist from the Foreign Agricultural Service to examine this cotton production. I remember we started at the Embassy in Damascus and went up to the Consulate at Aleppo. We took off from there up the river. There was no road, just tracks through the desert sand. We hired a guide so we wouldn't get lost. He said he knew the country like the back of his hand. We hadn't gotten ten miles out of town before he was hopelessly lost. We had a Chevrolet Blazer and the motor got so covered with dust it choked down. The Bedouins were dangerous and it was rather a dicey trip. But we had some wonderful experiences and saw a lot of cotton. They were using basically pumps put into the Euphrates River. They were growing some wheat too, but the main expansion in those days was cotton.

Q: Let's go back to your time when you were in Egypt. Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal. Everybody was confined more or less to Cairo. It was obviously a time of hostility and tension between the Egyptians and Westerners. How did you operate in those days?

HOWARD: I can't remember in detail, but Mohammed Dessouky would go out and get information and there were the Egyptian publications which he would translate, and we had access to the telephone. So we continued to grind out the reports that were due. They just weren't quite as detailed as they might otherwise have been.

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Q: How did the Embassy respond to what became known as the Suez Crisis? We are talking about the fall of 1956.

HOWARD: There was considerable concern about security. The Embassy buildings were all within a compound with a wall around them. There was a gate at the entrance and there was always an Egyptian who stood there as a guard and acted as a receptionist as well. The gates were always open and no one was barred from entering.

On this particular day, I was somewhere around town and I decided to stop by the Embassy and get briefed on what the latest news was. When we got to the Embassy the gates were closed. That was a traumatic experience to drive up there and see those gates closed.

You may recall that the Brits were bringing out their dependents and the French were bringing out their dependents. We were not. We were saying that we were going to work with Nasser and saw nothing to worry about and left our dependents there. This was a source of some anxiety for all of us in the Embassy. My home was out in Maadi, which is on the desert in a suburban area some distance from downtown Cairo. In this desert area lived a number of Americans. We had a network of communications. It was my job to contact six families and give the word, whatever the word might be. We wouldn't depend on the telephone for fairly obvious reasons.

When the British decided to bring out their dependents, there was a big debate in the Embassy. The Ambassador brought in the DCM, the Administrative Officer, etc. and they debated until well into the evening what word they were going to pass out through this network. By the time it got to me it was 9:00 in the evening. The word was that the Ambassador said the Embassy was watching things very carefully. There was nothing to be concerned about at the moment. Don't worry.

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I have to get into my car and drive around to these six neighbors. One of these neighbors was a young Naval MD research officer who was over there on a Naval research project. He had just moved into his house and had been unpacking all day and hadn't been into the Embassy. I went up and introduced myself and said, "The Ambassador says to tell you you are not to worry." His wife is standing there too. "I am not to worry about what?" I told him about the Brits withdrawing their dependents, etc. This got him so upset he didn't get any sleep all night.

Q: How did the actual 1956 war impact on you?

HOWARD: Before the war happened, before the invasion, things had been getting somewhat better. It looked as though the UN was going to be able to negotiate a settlement. So, I talked to Pete Hart about resuming travel. He said, "Yes, I think it is safe." So my colleague, Frank Eamon [ph] was to go to Syria and Lebanon and I was to go to the Sudan, but at different times so one of us was always there.

I found out that the Air Attach# was going to fly down to Khartoum in a Naval plane and my wife could go if she wanted. So we arranged with American friends who had a dependent, their mother, to come and stay in our house and look after the children. Winifred went to Khartoum for her first visit, a long weekend. She flew back and I resumed my trip.

I had two missions. One was to go to the port. The Sudanese cotton came out via one track railroad that wound up at Port Sudan. I was to go to Port Sudan and study this situation, see about the chances for log jams for expansion, etc. Then I was going up the river. El Mahdi's grandson was still living on an island where El Mahdi came from and they had started growing cotton. This grandson had invited me up there to study this development. I was keen to see it because of the historical development.

I got to Port Sudan and just as I arrived the hotel clerk said that my wife had called. Well now Stu, this is in the middle of Africa and you know your wife is not going to call to say

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howdy. I didn't want to show too much concern for obvious diplomatic reasons. I tried to call her but there wasn't any chance of getting through to Cairo. After asking, I was told that the next plane flew in the next morning. None of this news had reached Port Sudan. So when the plane arrived there was Jim Howard out on the tarmac. I really pulled my diplomatic passport on that one. Thank heavens it was a British captain. As he stepped out of the plane I said, "Captain, what's happening around the world?" He says, "Well, do you want to start with Hungary or with Cairo?" The Hungarian revolution was taking place. I said, "Well, Cairo was closer." And he told me what had happened.

Later my wife got through a message saying that the Ambassador said I was not to come back but to go to Rome and join them there. Now think about that. I have a wife and two small children, an office and I am told not to come back. Well, I got back to Khartoum pretty quickly and here was Ambassador Pinkerton and a couple of assistants, that was all the staff he had, and Jim Howard sitting around this big radio with ears glued to BBC, listening to the news. Eventually I flew out from there via Libya to Rome.

Meanwhile, the decision had been immediate to evacuate the dependents. But how do you get them out? At first we were going to send in American planes to take them out. Winifred, my wife, was teaching math in the Cairo-American College, a high school, because they couldn't get teachers due to the crisis. All the American dependents went out and all but a small nucleus of the Embassy staff left too. Somehow our house became a source of information for that area out there in the desert. She said people were there until 10:00 that evening. She finally got the two small children asleep and the phone rang and she was told a plane was coming at 1:00 or 2:00 to take out dependents. Since she had a diplomatic passport and could get through barriers easier than some others, she was told to be present with her two children and one suitcase a piece that she would be able to carry. She said, "My children have just gotten to sleep. Can't I come on a later plane?" They finally agreed that she could.

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Well, the plane got there and Nasser wouldn't let it land and it had to go back to Greece. So it would have been a waste anyway. They finally, several days later, were allowed to go by car convey to Alexandria. You may recall that by that time Dulles had rattled the sword a bit and said that Nasser was going to allow an American ship to get in there and get those dependents or there would be trouble. So she drove across the desert with these two small children and an Egyptian and got to Alexandria. There was antiaircraft fire and bombs were falling, but they were not hurt. She said that somebody struck a match to light a cigarette and was almost jumped on. So they stayed that night and the next day they were loaded on this Naval vessel that had been sent in to bring them out. This, Stu, was done on a 24 hours basis. It was a troop ship full of Marines. There were two compartments. Winifred was put in charge of the women and children in one of these two compartments. She said, "There were women who were pulled out like that who didn't know where their husbands were or couldn't get in touch with them and didn't have any money, who were pregnant, etc. It was a terrible thing."

They sat there in the harbor for hours because Nasser wouldn't pull up the mines. They had to keep the kids out on the deck with life jackets in case they were bombed. She remembers that our son was not very cooperative. But he stayed out there. Finally Nasser did pull up the mines. The Egyptian ships were right under the edge of our ship, shooting, antiaircraft fire, using our ship for protection, which didn't make them feel any happier.

But, anyway, when they did bring up the nets, every ship in the harbor started out and one cut across in front of ours. By this time Winifred was privy to the captain's discussions with the key people. He said, "Don't worry let him go first. If there are mines out there they will harvest them."

Well, they did get out and went to Crete where they changed ships and then on to Naples where I met them. I had two summer suits and a white dinner jacket and it was October in

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Rome. My wife had taken my overcoat and stuck inside it jackets of two winter suits and rolled it up. It was one of the most traumatic experiences in our whole career.

Q: Then you went back to Washington from there?

HOWARD: Yes. We stayed there for a couple of months. I was the senior officer from the Embassy there and had liaison with the Embassy in Rome. Bill Crockett was the Administrative Officer. He was a wonderful guy. This was a great trauma, but we couldn't have been treated more kindly by the American community. We had a good agricultural attach# there, a friend Ray Ogg, who was very kind to us.

But then there was the question of whether we would be going back. The children's education was involved. Finally it was decided in Washington that there wouldn't be enough work to justify an officer of my level, I had moved up a bit by that time, so they sent my assistant, Frank Eamon, back in a sort of holding pattern and I was brought to Washington.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point and we will pick it up at another time.

HOWARD: All right.

Q: We are going to add something that should be put back when you were running the Information Division.

HOWARD: One of the jobs of the Information Division was to furnish press officers for international agricultural conferences that were held in Washington. At this time there was a wheat organization similar to the cotton one which was trying to negotiate an international wheat agreement. The Soviet Union was an active participant in it. I am probably just barely 30 and I am the press officer. The Russians are having a cocktail party. I wondered if I should go to the Russian Embassy. I found out that if I didn't go I was the only one of the staff who wasn't going. I said I would go but still scary of that vodka.

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So, on my way there I stopped at the Little Tavern hamburger joint in Arlington and got myself a good milkshake and a hamburger so I wouldn't take that vodka on an empty stomach. I get there and remember this big impressive stairway you went up. There was a reception doorman type in full regalia to ask who you were. I said, "I am James Howard, the Press Officer for the conference." So he turned to the people and said, "This is James Howard, President of the conference." Fortunately, nobody heard him. I walked over to the bar and asked for a vodka. He said, "Sorry, we only have Scotch and Bourbon."

Q: Okay, thank you Jim.

Q: Today is August 27, 1993 and we are continuing an interview with Jim Howard. You left Cairo and came back to Washington in 1957. What were you doing when you came back?

HOWARD: This was a rather abrupt transfer due to the war. FAS was at a loss for a while as to what to do with me. I resumed some of my old work for a few months but was then assigned to the Fats and Oils Division. This means soybeans. It means cotton seed oil. It means peanuts. It means cobra and any source of edible oil. But by far the most important one was soybean oil. Soybeans were the miracle crop of this period.

Q: These were the things that your father was growing on a side pasture earlier on.

HOWARD: Yes, and he was growing them mostly for soil building. This was another commodity area to add to my education and I was pleased to take it. So I worked there for a year before I was asked to take a new and more responsible job.

I will just say this about the Fats and Oil Division, my job was to cover Europe for the marketing branch, which was the one that had the responsibility for gathering market information and encouraging marketing expansion. It was great fun and a good education. It was in that same area that I was asked just a year later to take a more responsible job.

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I think I mentioned earlier that Congress and the agricultural establishment of America faced a fundamental decision after the Marshall Plan had run its course and the Korean War had come and gone. We had had a tremendous demand for agricultural products but now Europe was getting back on its feet to some extent, at least people were not starving, and we were beginning to face surpluses. I think I said that after World War I we decided to cut back production. This time we decided to push foreign markets.

The most important piece of legislation to do this was Public Law 480, the Agricultural Trade and Development Act of 1954. This act provided that we could sell surplus agricultural commodities to countries who needed them but were unable to pay for them because of balance of payments difficulties.

We had had a little experience in this before and it had worked. We would sell soybeans to Germany, which was desperately short of foreign exchange at that period, and they would pay for it in German Marks which we would agree to use only in Germany—blocked currency. What were we going to do with this blocked currency? How were we going to use it? Well, Congress in passing this legislation listed quite a long number of things. At the top of the list was to develop and expand new markets for US agricultural products on a mutually benefitting basis.

We had no experience in market promotion. We were an intelligence organization in the old days. And here we were being forced to become an action agency. I mentioned that the agency had just had new organic legislation and the name changed to the Foreign Agricultural Service. We were bringing in some people from the old Production and Marketing Administration who ran the Commodity Credits Corporation, who had had a bit of experience selling agricultural products for blocked currency. Among those was a bright young guy named Ray Ioanes who had been with the Military Government in Germany. He later moved up in that program and ran it for a dozen years.

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So, there was the question of how we were going to do this. The US government had done no market promotion. The Department of Commerce was facing the same question for non-agricultural products. They were just beginning to see how they might go into it. There were several options. We could hire people and run it ourselves, but we weren't sure how long we were going to have this foreign currency. You hire a bunch of people and they soon become redundant.

There were in existence a number of agricultural trade associations. One was in the field of cotton. The National Cotton Council consisted of the cotton growers, ginner, crushers, exporters, etc. who came together and formed a trade association to push for cotton. They had a modest, but a pretty good budget. They had already been doing foreign intelligence studying the cotton market in Egypt, etc. They were also here in the US promoting cotton sales, working with department stores to push cotton. They thought, and we thought, that that idea would work abroad. So, to shorten the story just a bit, we decided that we would go into partnership with these non-profit agricultural trade associations. There was one for cotton, wheat, fats and oils, tobacco, fruits and vegetables, etc. They had some dollars and we had some foreign currency. So the agreement was that we would pay the overseas expenditures and they would pay the US expenditures for personnel, domestic travel, etc. So we had a partnership.

One very interesting thing there was to draw up a contract, which would protect the government but still let these organizations do trial and error experiments in a field which nobody knew much about. So very bright people, including a lawyer named Ralph Cobel drew up a contract under which these associations agreed that they would "endeavor" to expand these markets. It wasn't if the market doesn't expand you have to give the money back. This language was found to be okay by the lawyers and by Congress. So we developed these contracts.

An example, if it looks as though cotton had good prospects in Japan, the Cotton Council would go over there and meet with the cotton spinners, or maybe there was an

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organization in Japan somewhat like the Cotton Council. If not they would work with the cotton spinners and weavers and work out a program. The spinners and weavers would put their money into it too because it would help their business. So we were getting a multiplier effect in this money. They would do all sorts of things. For example, the Cotton Council had an annual event called the Maid of Cotton.

Q: Oh, yes. I met one one time in Korea. A pretty young lady.

HOWARD: It was a competition something like Miss America but from the cotton belt. She would be decked out in the finest wardrobe that New York designers could come up with all made of cotton. She would go abroad and be hosted by the cotton spinners and weavers in the various countries of the world. She was high fashion and good press coverage. I remember, for example, when she went to Thailand. The Queen of Thailand had never appeared publicly in any fabric other than silk at the time. Well, the Cotton Council decided to talk her into wearing a cotton frock. She was reluctant, particularly reluctant to give the Cotton Council her measurements. But she finally did with proper protection. They took those measurements back to New York and New York again designed some wonderful gowns for the Queen of Thailand. And when she first showed up in that cotton gown at a royal ball, it was big news. And so they created news all over the world.

I don't know how much this program can now take responsibility for it, but when I go in to buy a golf shirt, I can't find one that is a fast drying one. They are all cotton.

I will give you another example since I just left the Fats and Oils Division. The organization was created by the farmers that produce soybeans and the crushers in this country. It was called the Soybean Association of America and headed by a man named Harold Roach. Roach was an Iowa farmer who ran a farm management company as well as some other business interests. He was bright, aggressive and hardworking. He had the worse example I have ever encountered of contempt for bureaucracy. His attitude was that this

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money had been voted by Congress and we should just turn it over to him and leave him alone.

Well, when I was still in the Fats and Oils Division, I had the dubious pleasure of going to Europe with Harold Roach and his wife and one other man from the industry, to meet with the various entities in Europe who might be interested in cooperating.

We would go, let's say, into Spain. The agricultural attach# would have made a program and appointments with various people in the government and in the industry. In these meetings Roach would explain what he was up to and see if they were interested. Eventually there would be a program. Roach hired a man, without money, who was a Spaniard and set him up in an office and directed him in his work. It worked. For example, Spain is a big olive oil exporter. Spain was desperately short of edible oil for its margarine and vegetable oils. But they detested anything other than olive oil. Soybean oil? No way. Roach talked them in to blending a certain amount of soybean oil in with their olive oil. It would give it the olive oil taste, but it would be mostly soybean oil. This would then allow the industry and the government to export a lot of this valuable olive oil and thus bring in foreign exchange. That is the way it started.

I remember going over there and seeing a cartoon in their humor magazine, like the New Yorker or the British Punch. It had a picture of a keeper of a castle. The castle is being besieged. The defenders are up on the top pouring something out over the attackers. The caption said, "It doesn't have to be boiling. If it is soybean oil, that is enough." But the success of the program overcame the opposition. Eventually they started buying more and more oil and then they began to buy our soybeans and crush them so that they would have not only the soybean oil, but the residue from the crushing which is a meal that is a major ingredient in our livestock feed. They used the meal and it tied in with our efforts to sell them corn. It became one of the most successful programs.

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I could go on and on, but my job was to run a newly created division which did two things, which provided the controls, the mechanism...we made the program run. We did the budgeting. We did the regulations. We wrote the contracts with these trade associations. We sent people overseas to run workshops to educate the people they had hired overseas. It was an exciting program. At first we didn't have to go to Congress because we got this fine currency direct from the Bureau of the Budget. Eventually the Bureau of the Budget decided that was too loose and they got Congress to say that we had to go through the appropriations process. But it basically was almost free money and Congress was pushing it at us. They kept asking us to expand the program. We kept saying that we couldn't do it any faster than these non-profit groups can get people trained, etc. So we began to do some of our self. We would do some of the research.

We also organized a trade fair exhibit program. In other words, this was the way you cut across commodities. Let's say in London there would be a big annual food fair. We would mount an exhibit in that food fair and invite the American food processors as well as firms like the Canned Peach Organization, etc. to come in. The Cling Peach Association in California is a major exporter of canned peaches. They had not done much overseas so we invited them to come and have an exhibit. They would send some good people from the industry as well as their staff and have a good show there in London. But while there these businessmen would get out and talk to the importers of canned peaches. That way they would get their feet wet, get some experience. Eventually they signed a cooperative agreement with us to have a program of their own. That happened with a number of groups. Most of these shows were modest in size, two or three hundred dollars in those days. We had one in Europe for the top importers of Europe. I remember Arnold Toynbee, the historian, was one of the featured speakers at one of the seminars we had. It was exciting.

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That trade fair part was run by a young man named Ken Crow, a dynamic ex-bomber pilot over Burma, India and China. He created it and ran it. It pretty soon was made a separate division so I was not responsible for that for very long. But I continued with this other.

My wife was teaching school in McLean, Langley, and our children were in college. So, my wife wasn't willing to leave home and quit teaching. So I was sort of stuck for ten years. But it was an exciting ten years.

Oh, one other thing I should tell you about. About the fourth or fifth year of it, the House Government Operations Committee had a subcommittee that felt it had jurisdiction in our area. It started looking into this program. The investigator thought Harold Roach was too wasteful, spending too freely American government money. He particularly started after him. He spent several years looking into this program and writing draft reports and sending them to us. I remember Ken Crow and I worked for three or four months solid answering this draft report. We would be able to answer it to the satisfaction of people outside, so the report never got issued. But Ray loanes, in the administration section, said it gave him some sleepless nights.

That was the only negative aspect of it over the whole ten years. Otherwise it was Congress and these farm organizations thinking highly of it. It got so popular that in subsequent years the appropriations just skyrocketed and I wonder if it is not much too high now.

Q: Well, it seems to be almost contrary to my experience and I think others have had, not with farm products but with other American items for exports, that how poorly, particularly in the fifties and sixties, many of our major firms were in promoting export items. We had a big market in the United States and the firms weren't willing to make concessions to specific needs of other countries. It was a sort of take it or leave it type thing. They would put their headquarters in a place like Geneva or Brussels and then wouldn't get out into the hustings to find markets. I know when I was in the Persian Gulf firms just wouldn't

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come there to try to sell anything. It was a small market in those days, but they wouldn't make the effort. It seems like the farm commodity people were much more aggressive and willing to go out.

HOWARD: Maybe it was the nature of the farm products. You speak of the Persian Gulf area. I recall going to Iran and Howard Roach had an office in Iran. We were selling them a lot of soybean products. I don't know what ever happened to the market, but it was a good one then. Part of the success may have been the fact that the world was short of food in those early days and particularly short of industrial products that came from agriculture, like soybean oil, for example. They were short of protein in their diet so ingredients of livestock feed were not too difficult to push.

Take Japan. Here was Japan after World War II. They had been defeated. General MacArthur was doing a good job. We wanted to be helpful. We helped them rewrite their constitution. Our wheat people went in there into a rice eating environment and worked with the school lunch program. We were buying them skimmed milk and helped them organize a school lunch program. It gave the kids a good extra meal a day. It was extremely popular and it sold our products.

Q: Around 1970 you went to the Senior Seminar.

HOWARD: Yes. Ray loanes, who was my boss and a close personal friend, decided that it was time for me to make a move and he selected me to go to Senior Seminar. Many people, who you will be interviewing, have been to that Seminar and will feel just as I do that it was the finest year of my life. It was a wonderful experience. I made friends that stand me in good stead today. My class was the 13th. It produced maybe five men who became ambassadors. I think it is a fine institution. In fact I drove by the new campus off route 50 today. I couldn't tell much about it but I hope I will be invited to the opening.

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Q: Oh, you will. And then our organization will move over there. So you left in 1971. Where did you go then?

HOWARD: After the Senior Seminar I was made Deputy Assistant Administrator for Market Development. This means that I moved up and was the deputy to the person who was running the program. It was a year or two before Winifred agreed to stop teaching and I again was sent abroad.

Q: Your third post was Sweden?

HOWARD: Yes.

Q: From when to when?

HOWARD: From 1972-77. We were there for five years.

Q: When you think about an agricultural attach# in Sweden, it is a little hard to figure out what one would do there?

HOWARD: Remember I had just come from ten years in marketing development. The Swedes are a wealthy nation and import a substantial amount of their food. So on a per capita basis it is an excellent market for US agriculture. Much of my effort was to work with these non-profit trade associations in pushing markets. We had two or three of these trade fair exhibits while I was there. We did all sorts of interesting new things, but we also did the bread and butter.

The Cotton Council was there. Sweden had a good cotton textile industry with some fine mills and designers. I was also accredited to Finland during those five years and went over there a number of times a year. Meyer _____, who your wife will know, is a fine designer of cotton textiles sold worldwide. So in both these countries there were good

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cotton mills and great designers and some very good exporters. So we pushed with them and had a successful program.

I mentioned canned peaches earlier. I remember the canned peach man who was stationed in Europe would come over a couple of times a year and I would go with him to call on the big food chains and push the market. I would have a reception for him and give the prestige of the Embassy to this effort. We would have a reception maybe in the Embassy.

Q: How did the Ambassadors work with this type of thing?

HOWARD: I never did have an Ambassador who interfered. They varied in their enthusiasm for it. Our Ambassador during much of my time there was Strausz-Hup#. He liked to go to receptions I used to put on. I would take him around to meet some of these trade people. He wouldn't remember their names, but he was a gracious person. I had no criticism with his support.

But over in Finland, for example, the Ambassador there was a non-State Department man, who had been a radio station talk show operator and owned a radio station in Washington, Mark Aldridge. He was a wonderful guy. He was trade oriented. He said, "Jim, any time you want to have a reception in Finland, you are welcome to have it in my house." He enjoyed these things. We worked well together. I remember, for example, towards the latter part of my tour there I was invited to go fishing by some of the agricultural leaders of the country. I said, "Would you mind if I invited the Ambassador?" "Oh, of course not. We would be delighted." So we went fishing with them. Now fishing with the Finns is an experience. In the first place you are out in the Baltic Sea and the fishing rights of a piece of water are owned by the person who owns the island nearest to it. So you have to get the fishing rights to go out there. But that was no barrier to these people who included the big dairy of Finland. They had an island out there for a base and a nice boat. We picked up the island owner who owned the fishing rights, he went with us. But some of the leaders

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of the agriculture of the country were there. There was an ex-banker and an ex-Foreign Minister. The Ambassador enjoyed it. I remember the boat lurched and a door slammed on his hand and hurt him terribly and he grinned and bore it for 24 hours until there was the chance to get him off and back to Helsinki where he found out two bones were broken in his hand. But he had stuck with the fishing because there was a good deal of alcohol drinking at night and good food. It was good foreign relations.

Q: You were in Sweden during the early seventies. Relations were, to say the least, cool. I mean regular relations. Olaf Palme was the Prime Minister who was a good solid Socialist and going around sticking it to the United States any time. You had President Nixon, supported by Henry Kissinger, who didn't take this lightly. How did this intrude?

HOWARD: Olaf Palme was a well educated person. In fact he was a graduate of Kenyon College in Ohio. Where he irritated us unbearably was in his criticism of the Vietnamese war. My wife was as critical of that policy as Olaf Palme, but she said, "You know, to have that guy preaching to us day after day and I am suppose to sit there and take it, it is pretty hard." And it was hard to take. I have forgotten what happened and triggered Nixon to angrily say, "Bring our Ambassador home." The State Department said, "He is already home." "Don't let him go back." Then the DCM somehow got out of the country. Anyway, the Embassy was run for eight or ten months by the chief Political Officer, whose name was Arthur Olsen. He was not a career Foreign Service officer, but had been in the Foreign Service for some time. He was a journalist by training. Art Olsen ran that Embassy and we never had a better period. He was a good administrator and we all got along famously. I kept pushing markets for agricultural products.

Q: There weren't movements a foot to boycott American products?

HOWARD: I always thought of myself as a fairly liberal person. But back in California the grape growers were having their problems with a labor organizer, Caesar Chavez. My sympathies were completely with him as he was trying to organize the workers over there.

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But as one of his tools he was working in Sweden, for example, to try to get the big food chains to boycott American lettuce. Now here is where my respect for Caesar Chavez's efforts ran counter to my job in Sweden, which was to sell lettuce. I waited for Washington to give me some instructions. They were caught between the same rock and hard place. I finally developed some copy to give to these food chains defending their buying the lettuce...things they could do to answer their public. I sent a copy back to Washington telling them what I had done. They immediately published it and that became our policy on these things.

There was a guy over there covering that part of the world for Caesar Chavez and he ran an article in The Nation criticizing what we were doing and Jim Howard by name. So, for a guy who almost didn't get to go abroad because he was a Democrat under Benson, to be criticized by the farm workers rounded out the picture.

Q: Then in about 1977 you went to South Africa. Is that right?

HOWARD: That's right.

Q: You were there from 1977-81. Now this is a whole different atmosphere from where you were before. What were you doing there?

HOWARD: I wasn't excited when asked to go to South Africa. Again, I suppose about 99 percent of the people in our foreign service were not favorable to the South African government's policy of apartheid.

Q: This was doing the high apartheid period.

HOWARD: Yes, and as a product of an Alabama farm who knew racial intolerance firsthand and whose neighbors and so forth had been party to it, I felt very strongly on this. But Agriculture wanted me to go there and my wiser friends in the State Department in Stockholm said, "Look, Jim, we have a full staff there and all of them feel just like you. It

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is a job. You are asked to do it and you go ahead and do it." So, Winifred and I went. You can only wear your conscious on your sleeve a certain amount of time. The rest of the time you have to go on living.

From a standpoint of creature comforts, South Africa was as pleasant as any post we ever had, perhaps the most pleasant. We had a nice house and two competent servants. The weather was ideal. On a cold winter day Winifred could go out on the terrace by 10:00 and have a cup of coffee sitting in the sun. There was a country club just down the road. It was good living and not a bad place to wind out our career.

Q: What were you particularly working on there?

HOWARD: South Africa is a significant agricultural producer and exporter, so they were interested in some of the same products, the same markets as we, but they were also significant importers from us. Fruit, for example. They were a big exporter of fruit to Europe. These same voices that were trying to boycott Caesar Chavez were also trying to boycott South African oranges and apples, etc. in Europe. As soon as these boycotts started on South African oranges, they just changed the name to Swazigold...Swaziland being a black independent nation within South Africa. It was the darling of my friends in Sweden so they would import these Swazigold oranges with great gusto.

The Department of Agriculture had continuous problem in Europe, particularly with the Germans, about regulations on insecticide, pesticide, residue left on fruit. You are going to spray apples to keep the bugs from eating them. Only a certain amount of that residue can be on them when they reach the consumer or you are in trouble or prohibited entry. They don't like you to use certain pesticides. Well, of course, our agricultural producing interests were contrary to those consuming interests to a certain extent, although our consumers in this country felt somewhat like that. So we were constantly negotiating with these Europeans, particularly the Germans, to not put into affect regulations that would make it impossible for our fruit, which met US standards to come in their country.

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Okay, the South Africans faced that same problem. They were exporting oranges and apples to those same countries. So we would work together with the South Africans and other countries, the New Zealanders, etc., that exported fruit to Europe to try to keep them from making these regulations that we thought were unjustified from the United States.

Q: Was it the feeling that these regulations were really designed more to protect the domestic producers?

HOWARD: This was a complicated issues. Most of them, I think, were designed to protect their consumers. But we thought they could protect their consumers in a way that still would allow us to get good wholesome fruit to them that would have a decent shelf life. There may have been a little internal European Community politics in it. The Italians raised fruit and the Spanish raised fruit and they were quite willing to see our fruit disadvantaged in that market.

Q: Who were the Ambassadors when you were there and how were they dealing with the problem? This was mostly with the Carter period wasn't it?

HOWARD: Bill Bowdler was Ambassador there for just a few months after my arrival, and we had a pleasant relationship. He was succeeded by Bill Edmondson. Bill Edmondson and I worked together for three years. I never had a more pleasant and fruitful working relationship with anyone regardless of organization. He was just a find officer who knew his job and did it well and was considerate of his people. We remain good friends to this day.

Q: I know Bill and also have very high regards for him.

HOWARD: Let me use this story to illustrate how an agricultural attach# can be particularly useful to an embassy. The US is doing all it can within its limitations of international diplomacy to discourage apartheid and encourage the black leadership of South Africa and we needed all the information we could get. Now many of these blacks lived in

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these homelands. I, as an agricultural attaché, had a legitimate reason for going to those homelands and studying their agriculture. Agriculture was about all they had.

So I made detailed reports on the agriculture of the major homelands of South Africa. They were appreciated not only by Bill Edmondson and his immediate staff, but in the State Department.

One illustration. I wanted to go to Natal to Quazulu, the homeland of the Zulus. The South African government was reluctant to have me go in there without them. Bill Edmondson's advise to me was, "Jim, you can let them help you but you don't ask their permission. You can go."

Well, the man who was responsible for it in the South African government happened to be a guy who I was playing golf with and we got along famously. He said, "Jim, I will set up a program for you. Whatever you want to do." I said, "One thing I want to do is meet a chief." You meet with individual black farmers and you meet with the white people working with them, but I had never met a chief to get that point of view on agriculture in the homelands. He thought it was a good idea. He really laid on a good program doing what I asked him to do.

The chief they chose was the King of the Zulus. We have heard a lot in this country about Boudelaize, the Prime Minister, but we haven't heard much about the King of the Zulus, whose name is King Goodwill. King Goodwill was not nearly as bright as Boudelaize, but he spoke good English and he was no fool. He entertained me for a nice lunch. The economic counselor of the Embassy was with me. I was quite impressed by the role the King played. For example, as we were served, people coming in bearing dishes would stoop low because the King was sitting. Some of the lowest people would come in literally on their knees. The chief agriculturalist, who was my immediate guide, was pretty high up and would bow slightly, but they all showed this great deference for the King.

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The King was very cordial. That item in the corner of the room is a knob carry. King Goodwill presented me with it when I left, one of the weapons of the Zulus.

Q: A head knocker.

HOWARD: That's right. This is a ceremonial piece with beads representing the various elements of their culture. I don't know how many Americans have had lunch with King Goodwill. It was quite an interesting experience.

Q: Did you find that our rather adamant antipathy towards apartheid, particularly during this period under the Carter Administration, which was very heavy on human rights, have much effect on your effectiveness in getting your work done?

HOWARD: Yes. But let me say first that I found apartheid to be more complex than I had expected, but I found it even more insidious than I had realized. So I had not the slightest reservation about our government's policy. When I would invite agricultural leaders of South Africa to my home, they would come, but they would not reciprocate. This was not true of the business community. I had good relations with the farmers organization. The head of the organization had me down to his home, a farm in the country where his mother, who is British, and still remembers the fighting of the Boers and her being put in prison by the Boers and she was English. She had never forgiven them. Those relationships were very pleasant.

I have traveled all over South Africa. I had a Blazer, a government vehicle, to get out over the rough country. Winifred and I traveled the whole country. The farmers were without exception open and delighted to have me. We had wonderful discussions and they would arrange whatever I wanted. It was fine. This was not a personal thing with the agricultural leaders, it was their government's policy to be cool towards the US government in those days.

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Q: Well, you left there in 1981. Where did you see things going at that time?

HOWARD: There was no way I could see the status quo remaining. The black population was growing. Let me give you a small story. One of the US products that we were exporting there in considerable quantity was rice. The rice growers of Arkansas and Louisiana had an office there that was running this program. Rice was pushed in the white community because they had the money to buy rice. But while I was there, even in those four years, that program was shifted based on good market research and they began to put on radio programs.

End of interview